

It was dusk, on the evening of December 7, 1906, when I first encountered Sir John Harmon. At the moment of his entrance I was standing over the table in my study, a lighted match in my cupped hands and a pipe between my teeth. The pipe was never lit.

I heard the lower door slam shut with a violent clatter. The stairs resounded to a series of unsteady footbeats, and the door of my study was flung back. In the opening, staring at me with quiet dignity, stood a young, careless fellow, about five feet ten in height and decidedly dark of complexion. The swagger of his entrance branded him as an adventurer. The ghastly pallor of his face, which was almost colorless, branded him as a man who has found something more than mere adventure.

"Doctor Dale?" he demanded.

"I am Doctor Dale."

He closed the door of the room deliberately, advancing toward me with slow steps.

"My name is John Harmon—Sir John Harmon. It is unusual, I suppose," he said quietly, with a slight shrug, "coming at this late hour. I won't keep you long."

He faced me silently. A single glance at those strained features convinced me of the reason for his coming. Only one thing can bring such a furtive, restless stare to a man's eyes. Only one thing—fear.

"I've come to you. Dale, because—" Sir John's fingers closed heavily over the edge of the table—"because I am on the verge of going mad."

"From fear?"

"From fear, yes. I suppose it is easy to discover. A single look at me...."

"A single look at you," I said simply, "would convince any man that you are deadly afraid of something. Do you mind telling me just what it is?"

He shook his head slowly. The swagger of the poise was gone; he stood upright now with a positive effort, as if the realization of his position had suddenly surged over him.

"I do not know," he said quietly. "It is a childish fear—fear of the dark, you may call it. The cause does not matter; but if something does not take this unholy terror away, the effect will be madness."

I watched him in silence for a moment, studying the shrunken outline of his face and the unsteady gleam of his narrowed eyes. I had seen this man before. All London had seen him. His face was constantly appearing in the sporting pages, a swaggering member of the upper set—a man who had been engaged to nearly every beautiful woman in the country—who sought adventure in sport and in night life, merely for the sake of living at top speed. And here he stood before me, whitened by fear, the very thing he had so deliberately laughed at!

"Dale," he said slowly, "for the past week I have been thinking things that I do not want to think and doing

things completely against my will. Some outside power—God knows what it is—is controlling my very existence."

He stared at me, and leaned closer across the table.

"Last night, some time before midnight," he told me, "I was sitting alone in my den. Alone, mind you—not a soul was in the house with me. I was reading a novel; and suddenly, as if a living presence had stood in the room and commanded me, I was forced to put the book down. I fought against it, fought to remain in that room and go on reading. And I failed."

"Failed?" My reply was a single word of wonder.

"I left my home: because I could not help myself. Have you ever been under hypnotism, Dale? Yes? Well, the thing that gripped me was something similar—except that no living person came near me in order to work his hypnotic spell. I went alone, the whole way. Through back streets, alleys, filthy dooryards—never once striking a main thoroughfare—until I had crossed the entire city and reached the west side of

the square. And there, before a big gray town-house, I was allowed to stop my mad wandering. The power, whatever it was, broke. I—well, I went home."

Sir John got to his feet with an effort, and stood over me.

"Dale," he whispered hoarsely, "what was it?"

"You were conscious of every detail?" I asked.

"Conscious of the time, of the locality you went to? You are sure it was not some fantastic dream?"

"Dream! Is it a dream to have some damnable force move me about like a mechanical robot?"

"But.... You can think of no explanation?" I was a bit skeptical of his story.

He turned on me savagely.

"I have no explanation. Doctor," he said curtly. "I came to you for the explanation. And while you are thinking over my case during the next few hours,

perhaps you can explain this: when I stood before that gray mansion on After Street, alone in the dark, there was murder in my heart. I should have killed the man who lived in that house, had I not been suddenly released from the force that was driving me forward!"

Sir John turned from me in bitterness. Without offering any word of departure, he pulled open the door and stepped across the sill. The door closed, and I was alone.

That was my introduction to Sir John Harmon. I offer it in detail because it was the first of a startling series of events that led to the most terrible case of my career. In my records I have labeled the entire case "The Affair of the Death Machine."

Twelve hours after Sir John's departure—which will bring the time, to the morning of December 8—the headlines of the Daily Mail stared up at me from the table. They were black and heavy: those headlines, and horribly significant. They were:

# FRANKLIN WHITE Jr. FOUND MURDERED

## Midnight Marauder Strangles Young Society Man in West-End Mansion

I turned the paper hurriedly, and read:

Between the hours of one and two o'clock this morning, an unknown murderer entered the home of Franklin White, Jr., well known West-End sportsman, and escaped, leaving behind his strangled victim.

Young White, who is a favorite in London upper circles, was discovered in his bed this morning, where he had evidently lain dead for many hours. Police are seeking a motive for the crime, which may have its origin in the fact that White only recently announced his engagement to Margot Vernee, young and exceedingly pretty French débutante.

Police say that the murderer was evidently an amateur, and that he made no attempt to cover his

crime. Inspector Thomas Drake of Scotland Yard has the case.

There was more, much more. Young White had evidently been a decided favorite, and the murder had been so unexpected, so deliberate, that the Mail reporter had made the most of his opportunity for a story. But aside from what I have reprinted, there was only a single short paragraph which claimed my attention. It was this:

The White home is not a difficult one to enter. It is a huge gray town-house, situated just off the square, in After Street. The murderer entered by a low French window, leaving it open.

I have copied the words exactly as they were printed. The item does not call for any comment.

But I had hardly dropped the paper before she stood before me. I say "she"—it was Margot Vernee, of course—because for some peculiar reason I had expected her. She stood quietly before me, her cameo



face, set in the black of mourning, staring straight into mine.

"You know why I have come?" she said quickly.

I glanced at the paper on the table before me, and nodded. Her eyes followed my glance.

"That is only part of it, Doctor," she said. "I was in love with Franklin—very much—but I have come to you for something more. Because you are a famous psychologist, and can help me."

She sat down quietly, leaning forward so that her arms rested on the table. Her face was white, almost as white as the face of that young adventurer who had come to me on the previous evening. And when she spoke, her voice was hardly more than a whisper.

"Doctor, for many days now I have been under some strange power. Something frightful, that compels me to think and act against my will."

She glanced at me suddenly, as if to note the effect of her words. Then:

"I was engaged to Franklin for more than a month, Doctor: yet for a week now I have been commanded—commanded—by some awful force, to return to—to a man who knew me more than two years ago. I can't explain it. I did not love this man; I hated him bitterly. Now comes this mad desire, this hungering, to go to him. And last night—"

Margot Vernee hesitated suddenly. She stared at me searchingly. Then, with renewed courage, she continued.

"Last night, Doctor, I was alone. I had retired for the night, and it was late, nearly three o'clock. And then I was strangely commanded, by this awful power that has suddenly taken possession, of my soul, to go out. I tried to restrain myself, and in the end I found myself walking through the square. I went straight to Franklin White's home. When I reached there, it was half past three—I could hear Big Ben. I went in—through the wide French window at the side of the

house. I went straight to Franklin's room—*because I could not prevent myself from going.*"

A sob came from Margot's lips. She had half risen from her chair, and was holding herself together with a brave effort. I went to her side and stood over her. And she, with a half crazed laugh, stared up at me.

"He was dead when I saw him!" she cried. "Dead! Murdered! That infernal force, what ever it was, had made me go straight to my lover's side, to see him lying there, with those cruel finger marks on his throat—dead, I tell you, I—oh, it is horrible!"

She turned suddenly.

"When I saw him," she said bitterly, "the sight of him—and the sight of those marks—broke the spell that held me. I crept from the house as if I had killed him. They—they will probably find out that I was there, and they will accuse me of the murder. It does not matter. But this power—this awful thing that has been controlling me—is there no way to fight it?"

I nodded heavily. The memory, of that unfortunate fellow who had come to me with the same complaint was still holding me. I was prepared to wash my hands of the whole horrible affair. It was clearly not a medical case, clearly out of my realm.

"There is a way to fight it," I said quietly. "I am a doctor, not a master of hypnotism, or a man who can discover the reasons behind that hypnotism. But London has its Scotland Yard, and Scotland Yard has a man who is one of my greatest comrades...."

She nodded her surrender. As I stepped to the telephone, I heard her murmur, in a weary, troubled voice:

"Hypnotism? It is not that. God knows what it is. But it has always happened when I have been alone. One cannot hypnotise through distance...."

And so, with Margot Vernee's consent, I sought the aid of Inspector Thomas Drake, of Scotland Yard. In half an hour Drake stood beside me, in the quiet of

my study. When he had heard Margot's story, he asked a single significant question. It was this:

"You say you have a desire to go back to a man who was once intimate with you. Who is he?"

Margot looked at him dully.

"It is Michael Strange," she said slowly. "Michael Strange, of Paris. A student of science."

Drake nodded. Without further questioning he dismissed my patient; and when she had gone, he turned to me.

"She did not murder her sweetheart, Dale" he said. "That is evident. Have you any idea who did?"

And so I told him of that other young man. Sir John Harmon, who had come to me the night before. When I had finished. Drake stared at me—stared through me—and suddenly turned on his heel.

"I shall be back, Dale," he said curtly. "Wait for me!"

Wait for him! Well, that was Drake's peculiar way of going about things. Impetuous, sudden—until he faced some crisis. Then, in the face of danger, he became a cold, indifferent officer of Scotland Yard.

And so I waited. During the twenty-four hours that elapsed before Drake returned to my study, I did my best to diagnose the case before me. First, Sir John Harmon—his visit to the home of Franklin White. Then—the deliberate murder. And, finally, young Margot Vernee, and her confession. It was like the revolving whirl of a pinwheel, this series of events: continuous and mystifying, but without beginning or end. Surely, somewhere in the procession of horrors, there would be a loose end to cling to. Some loose end that would eventually unravel the pinwheel!

It was plainly not a medical affair, or at least only remotely so. The thing was in proper hands, then, with Drake following it through. And I had only to wait for his return.

He came at last, and closed the door of the room behind him. He stood over me with something of a swagger.

"Dale, I have been looking into the records of this Michael Strange," he said quietly. "They are interesting, those records. They go back some ten years, when this fellow Strange was beginning his study of science. And now Michael Strange is one of the greatest authorities in Paris on the subject of mental telegraphy. He has gone into the study of human thought with the same thoroughness that other scientists go into the subject of radio telegraphy. He has written several books on the subject."

Drake pulled a tiny black volume from the pocket of his coat and dropped it on the table before me. With one hand he opened it to a place which he had previously marked in pencil.

"Read it," he said significantly.

I looked at him in wonder, and then did as he ordered.  
What I read was this:

"Mental telegraphy is a science, not a myth. It is a very real fact, a very real power which can be developed only by careful research. To most people it is merely a curiosity. They sit, for instance, in a crowded room at some uninteresting lecture, and stare continually at the back of some unsuspecting companion until that companion, by the power of suggestion, turns suddenly around. Or they think heavily of a certain person nearby, perhaps commanding him mentally to hum a certain popular tune, until the victim, by the power of their will, suddenly fulfills the order. To such persons, the science of mental telegraphy is merely an amusement.

"And so it will be, until science has brought it to such a perfection that these waves of thought can be broadcast—that they can be transmitted through the ether precisely as radio waves are transmitted. In other words, mental telegraphy is at present merely a mild form of hypnotism. Until it has been developed



so that those hypnotic powers can be directed through space, and directed accurately to those individuals to whom they are intended, this science will have no significance. It remains for scientists of to-day to bring about that development."

I closed the book. When I looked up, Drake was watching me intently, as if expecting me to say something.

"Drake," I said slowly, more to myself than to him, "the pinwheel is beginning to unravel. We have found the beginning thread. Perhaps, if we follow that thread...."

Drake smiled.

"If you'll pick up your hat and coat, Dale," he interrupted, "I think we have an appointment. This Michael Strange, whose book you have just enjoyed so immensely, is now residing on a certain quiet little side street about three miles from the square, in London!"

I followed Drake in silence, until we had left Cheney Lane in the gloom behind us. At the entrance to the square my companion called a cab; and from there on we rode slowly, through a heavy darkness which was blanketed by a wet, penetrating fog. The cabby, evidently one who knew my companion by sight (and what London cabby does not know his Scotland Yard men!) chose a route that twisted through gloomy, uninhabited side streets, seldom winding into the main route of traffic.

As for Drake, he sank back in the uncomfortable seat and made no attempt at conversation. For the entire first part of our journey he said nothing. Not until we had reached a black, unlighted section of the city did he turn to me.

"Dale," he said at length, "have you ever hunted tiger?"

I looked at him and laughed.

"Why?" I replied. "Do you expect this hunt of ours will be something of a blind chase?"

"It will be a blind chase, no doubt of it," he said. "And when we have followed the trail to its end, I imagine we shall find something very like a tiger to deal with. I have looked rather deeply into Michael Strange's life, and unearthed a bit of the man's character. He has twice been accused of murder—murder by hypnotism—and has twice cleared himself by throwing scientific explanations at the police. That is the nature of his entire history for the past ten years."

I nodded, without replying. As Drake turned away from me again, our cab poked its laboring nose into a narrowing, gloomy street. I had a glimpse of a single unsteady street lamp on the corner, and a dim sign, "Mate Lane." And then we were dragging along the curb. The cab stopped with a groan.

I had stepped down and was standing by the cab door when suddenly, from the darkness in front of me, a strange figure advanced to my side. He glanced at me intently; then, seeing that I was evidently not the man he sought, he turned to Drake. I heard a whispered greeting and an undertone of conversation. Then, quietly, Drake stepped toward me.

"Dale," he said. "I thought it best that I should not show myself here to-night. No, there is no time for explanation now; you will understand later.

Perhaps"—significantly—"sooner than you anticipate. Inspector Hartnett will go through the rest of this pantomime with you."

I shook hands with Drake's man, still rather bewildered at the sudden substitution. Then, before I was aware of it, Drake had vanished and the cab was gone. We were alone, Hartnett and I, in Mate Lane.

The home of Michael Strange—number seven—was hardly inviting. No light was in evidence. The big house stood like a huge, unadorned vault set back from the street, some distance from its adjoining buildings. The heavy steps echoed to our footbeats as we mounted them in the darkness; and the sound of the bell, as Hartnett pressed it came sharply to us from the silence of the interior.

We stood there, waiting. In the short interval before the door opened, Hartnett glanced at his watch (it was nearly ten o'clock), and said to me:

"I imagine, Doctor, we shall meet a blank wall. Let me do the talking, please."

That was all. In another moment the big door was pulled slowly open from the inside, and in the entrance, glaring out at us, stood the man we had come to see. It is not hard to remember that first impression of Michael Strange. He was a huge man, gaunt and haggard, moulded with the hunched shoulders and heavy arms of a gorilla. His face seemed to be unconsciously twisted into a snarl. His greeting, which came only after he had stared at us intently, for nearly a minute, was curt and rasping.

"Well, gentlemen? What is it?"

"I should like a word with Dr. Michael Strange," said my companion quietly.

"I am Michael Strange."

"And I," replied Hartnett, with a suggestion of a smile, "am Raoul Hartnett, from Scotland Yard."

I did not see any sign of emotion on Strange's face. He stepped back in silence to allow us to enter. Then closing the big door after us, he led the way along a carpeted hall to a small, ill-lighted room just beyond. Here he motioned us to be seated, he himself standing upright beside the table, facing us.

"From Scotland Yard," he said, and the tone was heavy with dull sarcasm. "I am at your service, Mr. Hartnett."

And now, for the first time, I wondered just why Drake had insisted on my coming here to this gloomy house in Mate Lane. Why he had so deliberately arranged a substitute so that Michael Strange should not come face to face with him directly. Evidently Hartnett had been carefully instructed as to his course of action—but why this seemingly unnecessary caution on Drake's part? And now, after we had gained admission, what excuse would Hartnett offer for the intrusion? Surely he would not follow the bull-headed rôle of a common policeman!

There was no anger, no attempt at dramatics, in Hartnett's voice. He looked quietly up at our host.

"Dr. Strange," he said at length, "I have come to you for your assistance. Last night, some time after midnight, Franklin White was strangled to death. He was murdered, according to substantial evidence, by the girl he was going to marry—Margot Vernee. I come to you because you know this girl rather well, and can perhaps help Scotland Yard in finding her motive for killing White."

Michael Strange said nothing. He stood there, scowling down at my companion in silence. And I, too, I must admit, turned upon Hartnett with a stare of bewilderment. His accusation of Margot had brought a sense of horror to me. I had expected almost anything from him, even to a mad accusation of Strange himself. But I had hardly foreseen this cold blooded declaration.

"You understand, Doctor," Hartnett went on, in that same ironical drawl, "that we do not believe Margot Vernee did this thing herself. She had a companion,

undoubtedly, one who accompanied her to the house on After Street, and assisted her in the crime. Who that companion was, we are not sure; but there is decidedly a case of suspicion against a certain young London sportsman. This fellow is known to have prowled about the White mansion both on the night of the murder and the night before."

Hartnett glanced up casually. Strange's face was a total mask. When he nodded, the nod was the most even and mechanical thing I have ever seen. Certainly this man could control his emotions!

"Naturally, Doctor," Hartnett said, "we have gone rather deeply into the past life of the lady in question. Your name appears, of course, in a rather unimportant interval when Margot Vernee resided in Paris. And so we come to you in the hope that you can perhaps give us some slight bit of information—something that seems insignificant, perhaps, to you, but which may put us on the right track."

It was a careful speech. Even as Hartnett spoke it, I could have sworn that the words were Drake's, and



had been memorized. But Michael Strange merely stepped back to the table and faced us without a word. He was probably, during that brief interlude, attempting to realize his position, and to discover just how much Raoul Hartnett actually knew.

And then, after his interim of silence, he came forward sullenly and stood over my comrade.

"I will tell you this much, Mr. Hartnett of Scotland Yard," he said bitterly: "My relations with Margot Vernee are not an open book to be passed through the clumsy fingers of ignorant police officers. As to this murder, I know nothing. At the time of it, I was seated in this room in company with a distinguished group of scientific friends. I will tell you, on authority, that Margot *did not murder her lover*. Why? Because she loved him!"

The last words were heavy with bitterness. Before they had died into silence, Michael Strange had opened the door of his study.

"If you please, gentlemen," he said quietly.

Hartnett got to his feet. For an instant he stood facing the gorilla-like form of our host; then he stepped over the sill, without a word. We passed down the unlighted corridor in silence, while Strange stood in the door of his study, watching us. I could not help but feel, as we left that gloomy house, that Strange had suddenly focused his entire attention upon me, and had ignored my companion. I could feel those eyes upon me, and feel the force of the will behind them. A decided feeling of uneasiness crept over me, and I shuddered.

A moment later the big outer door had closed shut after us, and we were alone in Mate Lane. Alone, that is, until a third figure joined us in the shadows, and Drake's hand closed over my arm.

"Capital, Dale," he said triumphantly. "For half an hour you entertained him, you and Hartnett. And for half an hour I've had the unlimited freedom of his inner rooms, with the aid of an unlocked window on the lower floor. Those inner rooms, gentlemen, are significant—very!"

As we walked the length of Mate Lane, the gaunt, sinister home of Michael Strange became an indistinct outline in the pitch behind us. Drake said nothing more on the return trip, until we had nearly reached my rooms. Then he turned to me with a smile.

"We are one up on our friend, Dale," he said. "He does not know, just now, which is the bigger fool—you or Hartnett here. However, I imagine Hartnett will be the victim of some very unusual events before many hours have passed!"

That was all. At least, all of significance. I left the two Scotland Yard men at the opening of Cheney Lane, and continued alone to my rooms. I opened the door and let myself in quietly. And there some few hours later, began the last and most horrible phase of the case of the murder machine.

It began—or to be more accurate, I began to react to it—at three o'clock in the morning. I was alone, and the rooms were dark. For hours I had sat quietly by the table, considering the significant events of the

past few days. Sleep was impossible with so many unanswered questions staring into me, and so I sat there wondering.

Did Drake actually believe that Margot Vernee's simple story had been a ruse—that she had in truth killed her lover on that midnight intrusion of his home? Did he believe that Michael Strange knew of that intrusion—that he had possibly planned it himself, and aided her, in order that Margot might be free to return to him? Did Strange know of that other intrusion, and of the uncanny power which had driven Sir John Harmon, and supposedly driven Margot to that house on After Street?

Those were the questions that still remained without answers: and it was over those questions that I pondered, while my surroundings became darker and more silent as the hour became more advanced. I heard the clock strike three, and heard the answering drone of Big Ben from the square.

And then it began. At first it was little more than a sense of nervousness. Before I had been content to sit

in my chair and doze. Now, in spite of myself, I found myself pacing the floor, back and forth like a caged animal. I could have sworn, at the time, that some sinister presence had found entrance to my room. Yet the room was empty. And I could have sworn, too, that some silent power of will was commanding me, with undeniable force, to go out—out into the darkness of Cheney Lane.

I fought it bitterly. I laughed at it, yet even through my laugh came the memory of Sir John Harmon and Margot, and what they had told me. And then, unable to resist that unspoken demand, I seized my hat and coat and went out.

Cheney Lane was deserted, utterly still. At the end of it, the street lamp glowed dully, throwing a patch of ghastly light over the side of the adjoining building. I hurried through the shadows, and as I walked, a single idea had possession of me. I must hurry, I thought, with all possible speed, to that grim house in Mate Lane—number seven.

Where that deliberate desire came from I did not know. I did not stop to reason. Something had commanded me to go at once to Michael Strange's home. And though I stopped more than once, deliberately turning in my tracks, inevitably I was forced to retrace my steps and continue.

I remember passing through the square, and prowling through the unlightened side streets that lay beyond. Three miles separated Cheney Lane from Mate Lane, and I had been over the route only once before, in a cab. Yet I followed that route without a single false turn, followed it instinctively. At every intersecting street I was dragged in a certain direction and not once was I allowed to hesitate. It was as though some unseen demon perched on my shoulders, as the demon of the sea rode Sinbad, and pointed out the way.

Only one disturbing thing occurred on that night journey through London. I had turned into a narrow street hardly more than a quarter mile from my destination; and before me, in the shadows, I made out the form of a shuffling old man. And here, as I

watched him, I was conscious of a new, mad desire. I crept upon him stealthily, without a sound. My hands were outstretched, clutching, for his throat. At that moment I should have killed him!

I cannot explain it. During that brief interval I was a murderer at heart. I wanted to kill. And now that I remember it, the desire had been pregnant in me ever since the lights of Cheney Lane had died behind me. All the time that I prowled through those black streets, murder lurked in my heart. I should have killed the first man who crossed my path.

But I did not kill him. Thank God, as my fingers twisted toward the back of his throat, that mad desire suddenly left me. I stood still, while the old fellow, still unsuspecting, shuffled, away into the darkness. Then, dropping my hands with a sob of helplessness, I went forward again.

And so I reached Mate Lane, and the huge gray house that awaited me. This time, as I mounted the stone steps, the old house seemed even more repulsive and

horrible. I dreaded to see that door open, but I could not retreat.

I dropped the knocker heavily. A moment passed: and then, precisely as before, the huge door swung inward. Michael Strange stood before me.

He did not speak. Perhaps, if he had spoken, that fiendish spell would have been broken, and I should have returned, even then, to my own peaceful little rooms in Cheney Lane. No—he merely held the door for me to enter, and as I passed him he stood there, watching me with a significant smile.

Straight to that familiar room at the end of the hall I went, with Strange behind me. When we had entered, he closed the door cautiously. For a moment he faced me without speaking.

"You came very close to committing a murder on your way here, did you not, Dale?"

I stared at him. How, in God's name, could this man read my thoughts so completely?



"You would have completed the murder," he said softly, "had I wished it. I did not wish it!"

I did not answer. There was no reply to such a mad declaration. As for my companion, he watched me for an instant and then laughed. He was not mad. I am doctor enough to know that.

But the laugh was not long in duration. He stepped forward suddenly and took my arm in a steel grip, dragging me toward the half hidden door at the farther end of the room.

"I shall not keep you long, Dale," he said harshly. "I could have killed you—could have made you kill yourself, and in fact, I intended to do so—but after all, you are merely a poor stumbling fool who has meddled in things too deep for you."

He pulled open the door and pushed me forward. The room was dark, and not until he had closed the door again and switched on a dim light, could I see its contents.

Even then I saw nothing. At least, nothing of importance to an unscientific mind. There was a low table against the wall, with a profusion of tiny wires emanating from it. I was aware that a cup shaped microphone—or something very similar—hung over the table, about on a level with my eyes, had I been sitting in the chair. Beyond that I saw nothing, until Strange had moved forward and drawn aside a curtain that hung beside the table.

"I made you come here to-night, Dale," he murmured, "because I was a bit afraid of you. Your comrade, Hartnett, was an ignorant police officer. He has not the intellect to connect the series of events of the past day or two, and so I did not trouble myself with him. But you are an educated man. You have made no demonstrations of your ability in the field of science, but—"

He stopped speaking abruptly. From the room behind us came the sound of a warning bell. Strange turned quickly and went to the door.

"You will wait here, Doctor," he said. "I have another caller to-night. Another one who came the same way as you!"

He vanished. For a short interlude I was alone, with that peculiar radio-like apparatus before me. It was, for all the world, like a miniature control room in some small broadcasting station. Except for the odd shape of the microphone, if it was such I could detect no radical difference in equipment.

However, I had little time for conjecture. A patter of footsteps interrupted me from the next room, and a frightened, feminine voice broke the stillness of the outer study. Even before the owner of that voice stepped in to my presence, I knew her.

And when she came, with white, fearful face and trembling body, I could not withhold a shudder of apprehension. It was the young woman who had come to my office—Margot Vernee. Evidently, at last, she had yielded to the horrible impulse that had drawn her back to Michael Strange, an impulse which, I now understood, had originated from the man himself.

He pressed her forward. There was nothing tender in his touch: it was cruel and triumphant.

"So you have succeeded—at last," I said bitterly.

He turned to me with a sneer.

"I have brought her here, yes," he replied. "And now that she has come, she shall hear what I have to tell you. It will perhaps give her a respect for me, and this time she will not have the power to turn me away."

He pointed to the table, to the apparatus that lay there.

"I'm telling you this, Dale," he said, "because it gives me pleasure to do so. You are enough of a scientist to appreciate and understand it. And if, when I have finished, I have told you too much, there is a very easy way to keep your tongue silent. You have heard of hypnotism, Dale? You have heard also of radio? Have you ever thought of combining the two?"

He faced me directly. I made no effort to reply.

"Radio," he said quietly, "is broadcast by means of sound waves. That much you know. But hypnotism too, can be transmitted through distance, if an instrument delicate enough to transmit *thought waves* can be invented. For twenty years I have worked on that instrument, and for twenty years I have studied hypnotism. You understand, of course, that this instrument is worthless unless it is operated by a master mind. Thought waves are useless; they will not control the actions of even a cat. But hypnotic waves or concentrated thought waves—will control the world."

There was no denying him. He faced me with the savage triumph of a wild beast. He was glorying in his power, and in my amazement.

"I wanted Franklin White to die!" he cried. "It was I who murdered him. Why? Because he was about to take the girl I desired. Is that not reason enough for murder? And so I killed him. It was not Margot Vernee who strangled her lover: it was a complete stranger, a London sportsman, who had no reason for committing the murder, *except that I wished him to!*

"He died on the night of December seventh, murdered by Sir John Harmon, the sportsman. Why? Because, of all London, Sir John would be the last man to be suspected. I have a keen appreciation for the irony of fate! White would have died the night before, Dale, except that I lacked the courage to kill him. His murderer was standing, under my power, outside his very house—and then I suddenly thought it best that I should have an alibi. Your Scotland Yard is clever, and it was best that I have protection. And so, on the following night, I sent Sir John to the house once again. This time, while I sat here and controlled the actions of my puppet, a group of men sat here with me. They believed that I was experimenting with a new type of radio receiver!"

Michael Strange laughed, laughed harshly, in utter triumph, as a cat laughs at the antics of his mouse victims.

"When that murder was done," he said, "I sent Margot to the scene, so that she might see her lover strangled, dead. I repeat, Dale, that I enjoy the irony of fate, especially when I can control it. And as for

you—I brought you here to-night merely so that you would realize the intensity of the powers that control you. When you leave here, you will be unharmed—but after the exhibition I shall give you, I am sure that you will make no further attempt to interfere with things out of your realm of understanding."

I heard a sob from Margot. She had retreated to the door, and clung there. For myself, I did not move. Strange's recital had revealed to me the horrible lust that gripped him, and now I watched him in fascination. He would not harm the girl; that much I was sure of. In his distorted fashion he loved her. In his crazed, murderous way he would attempt to win her love, even though she had once scorned him.

I saw him step toward the table. Saw him drop heavily into the chair, and stare directly into that microphonic thing that hung before his eyes. As he stared, he spoke to me.

"Science, in its intricate forms, is probably above the mind of a common medical man, Dale," he said. "It would be useless to explain to you how my thoughts—

and my will—can be transmitted through space. Perhaps you have sat in a theater and stared at a certain person until that person turned to face you. You have? Then you will perhaps understand how I can control the minds of any human creature within the radius of my power. You see, Dale, this intricate little machine gives me the power to transform London into a city of stark murder. I could bring about such a horrible wave of crime that Scotland Yard would be scorned from one end of the world to the other. I could make every man murder his neighbor, until the streets of the city were running with blood!"

Strange turned quietly to look at me. He spoke deliberately.

"And now for the little exhibition of which I spoke, Dale," he murmured. "Your detective friend, Hartnett, has been under my power for the past three hours. You see, it was safer to control his movements, and be sure of him. And now, to be doubly sure of him, perhaps you would like to see him kill himself!"



I stepped forward with a sudden cry. Strange said nothing: his eyes merely burned into mine. Once again I felt that strange, all-powerful control forcing me back. I retreated, step by step, until the wall stopped me. Yet even as I retreated, a childish hope filled me. How could Strange, working his terrible murder machine, concentrate his power on any individual, when the whole of London lay before him?

He answered my question. He must have read it as it came over me.

"Have you ever been in a crowd, Dale, and watched a certain individual intently, until that particular individual turned to look at you? The rest of the crowd pays no attention, of course, but that one man. And now we shall make that one man murder himself!"

Strange turned slowly. I saw his fingers creep along the rim of the table, touching certain wires that came together there. I heard a dull, droning hum fill the room, and, over it, Strange's penetrating voice.

"When I am finished, Dale, I shall probably kill you. I brought you here merely to frighten you, but I believe I have told you too much."

With that new horror upon me, I saw my captor's lips move slowly....

And then, from the shadows at the other end of the small room, came a low, unemotional voice.

"Before you begin, Strange—"

Michael Strange whipped about in his chair like a tiger. His hand dropped to his pocket, so swiftly that my eyes did not follow it. And as it dropped, a single staccato shot split the darkness of the room. The scientist slumped forward in his chair.

The dull, whirring sound of that hellish machine had stopped abruptly, cut short by the sudden weight of Strange's lunging body as he fell upon it. I saw the livid, fiery snake of white light twist suddenly upward through that coil of wires: and in another moment the

entire apparatus shattered by a blinding crash of flame.

After that I turned away. Whether the bullet killed Strange or not, I do not know: but the sight of his charred face, hanging over that table of destruction, told its own story.

It was Inspector Drake who came across the room toward me, and took my arm. The smoking revolver still lay in his hand, and as he led me into the adjoining room, I saw that Margot had already found refuge there.

"You see now, Dale," Drake said quietly, "why I let Hartnett go with you before? If Strange had suspected me, I should have been merely another victim. As for Hartnett, he has been under constant guard down at headquarters. He's safe. They've kept him there, at my instructions, in spite of all his terrific efforts to leave them."

I was listening to my companion in admiration. Even then I did not quite understand.

"I was wrong in just one thing, Dale. I left you alone, without protection. I believed Strange would ignore you, because, after all, you are not a Scotland Yard man. Thank God I had the sense to follow Margot—to trail her here—and get here soon enough."

And so ended the horrible series of events that began with Sir John Harmon's chance visit to my study. As for Harmon, he was later cleared of all guilt, upon the charred evidence in Michael Strange's house in Mate Lane. The girl, I believe, has left London, where she can be as far as possible from memories that are all too terrible.

As for me, I am back once again in my quiet rooms in Cheney Lane, where the routine of common medical practice has wiped out many of those vivid horrors. In time, I believe, I shall forget, unless Inspector Drake, of Scotland Yard, insists upon bringing the affair up again!